

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 COA-02 EB-11 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

SS-15 USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-15 COME-00 INT-08 CG-00

DLOS-06 TRSE-00 DOTE-00 SAJ-01 MBFR-04 DRC-01 OMB-01

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4468

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 11382

E. O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PBOR, IC, UK

SUBJECT: ICELANDIC FISHERIES DISPUTE

REF: REYKJAVIK 1164

1. FOREIGN OFFICE OFFICIALS ARE GRATIFIED BY ICELANDIC PRIME MINISTER'S ACCEPTANCE OF PRIME MINISTER HEATH'S INVITATION TO VISIT LONDON TO FIND A MODUS VIVENDI IN ICELANDIC FISHERIES DISPUTE. THEY ARE, HOWEVER, KEEPING THEIR FINGERS CROSSED THAT IN INTERVAL BETWEEN NOW AND THE LONDON MEETING NOTHING WILL HAPPEN IN 12-50 MILE ZONE TO UPSET THE TEMPORARY TRUCE WHICH LOOKS LIKE TAKING PLACE. BRITISH OFFICIALS REMAIN SKEPTICAL OF JOHANNESSON'S ABILITY TO ENSURE THAT INCIDENTS DO NOT
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OCCUR. BRITISH FRIGATES WILL STAND OFF 50-MILE LIMIT

IN CASE THEY ARE NEEDED.

2. BRITISH OFFICIALS INDICATE THAT THEY ACCEPT THE FACT THAT JOHANNESSON MAY FEEL CONSTRAINED TO MAKE SOME PUBLIC STATEMENT THAT ICELANDIC COAST GUARD WILL CONTINUE TO DO ITS DUTY (PARA 2 REYKJAVIK'S 1164). AS LONG AS THERE IS NO ATTEMPT TO ASSERT ICELANDIC CLAIMS PHYSICALLY, I.E., INTERFERE WITH BRITISH TRAWLERS FISHING IN THE 12-50 MILE ZONE, THE BRITISH ARE PREPARED TO LIVE WITH THE SITUATION. SIMILARLY, BRITISH SEEH SATISFIEE THAT THEY CAN LIVE WITH SITUATION WHERE ICELAND DOES NOT GIVE EXPLICIT ASSURANCE THAT THEY WILL NOT HARASS TRAWLERS; THEY KNOW THAT JOHANNESSON COULD NOT IN PRESENT CLIMATE IN ICELAND GIVE SUCH ASSURANCE. ALL BRITISH HAVE ASKED (AND JOHANNESSON SEEMS TO BE ACQUIESII G) IS THAT ICELAND DE FACTO REFRAIN FROM HARASSMENT. AS HEATH MADE PLAIN IN HIS MESSAGE OF OCTOBER 2 TO JOHANNESSON, IF BRITISH ASSUMPTION PROVES WRONG, FRIGATES WOULD GO BACK IN PROMPTLY.

3. BRITISH EFFORTS TO DEFUSE THE COD WAR HAVE GENERALLY BEEN WELCOMED HERE. THE POSITIVE REACTION OF TRAWLER FEDERATION LEADERS CONTRASTS HOWEVER WITH CRITICAL COMMENTS ATTRIBUTED TO SEVERAL TRAWLER SKIPPERS ABOUT A "SELL-OUT" AND SOME PRESS REACTION THAT GOVERNMENT MOVE

REPRESENTS A DEFEAT FOR BRITISH POLICY. THE ASSURANCES

GIVEN TO THE TRAWLER MEN BY THE GOVERNMENT THAT THE

FRIGATES WOULD GO BACK INTO THE 12-50 MILE ZONE IF THERE WERE HARASSMENT SEEMS LIKELY TO MEET BRITISH DOMESTIC POLITICAL REQUIREMENTS FOR TIME BEING (SEE LONDON 11306).

4. FINALLY, IT IS FULLY REALIZED HERE WORKING OUT A HODUS VIVENDI WITH ICELAND WILL BE VERY EIFFICULT BUT THE OFFICIAL MOOD HERE IS AT LEAST ONE OF RELIEF THAT THE DRIFT OS EVENTS TOWARD A BREAK BETWEEN UK AND ICELAND HAS BEEN ARRESTED. FOREIGN OFFICE OFFICIALS HOPE THAT THIS POSITIVE TURN IN THE FISHERIES DISPUTE WILL HELP TO LAUNCH US-ICELANDIC NEGOTIATIONS ON IDS RETENTION MORE AUSPICIOUSLY THAN SEEMED LIKELY A FEW DAYS AGO.
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